

# **Brazos River and Associated Bay and Estuary System Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee (BBASC) Meeting**

**Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 10:00 a.m.**

**Brazos River Authority Office**

**Waco, Texas**

## **Minutes**

### **Introductions**

BBASC chair Dale Spurgin called the meeting to order.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Approval of January 24, 2012 meeting minutes**

The minutes of the January 24, 2011 meeting minutes were approved without changes.

### **Consideration of Professional Facilitators**

This agenda item was moved up in sequence to accommodate travel schedules of the prospective facilitators. Prior to the meeting, the BBASC solicited proposals from the two facilitator groups who have previous experience working with Senate Bill 3 stakeholder committees. The two groups, 1) Marty Rozelle (The Rozelle Group) and Susan Springer (Intrinsic Consulting), and 2) Suzanne Schwartz and Margaret Menicucci (University of Texas Center for Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution (CPPDR)), each gave presentations of their proposals to the BBASC. A question and answer session followed each presentation. After the presentations, the BBASC engaged in internal discussions to process the merits of each proposal. A motion was made and seconded to contract with CPPDR for the facilitation services of Suzanne Schwartz and Margaret Menicucci. All BBASC members were in favor of the motion.

### **Distribution of BBEST Reports**

Kirk Winemiller, vice-chair of the Brazos BBEST, took a moment to announce to the BBASC that the BBEST had finished its final recommendations report and that he had brought hard-copies of the report for each stakeholder. While the report copies were being distributed, Kirk mentioned that there was a lot of knowledge represented with the BBEST members which made for a better work product. He also offered the help and support of the BBEST as the BBASC goes through their process of developing environmental flow recommendations.

### **BBASC presentation: Why Rivers Are Important – Ed Lowe and others**

Steve Nelle, retired from NRCS, started the presentation (posted to website) by discussing the values and benefits of healthy creeks and riparian areas, especially in the context of the severe water challenges that Texas is facing. He said that healthy streams provide clean water, a reliable supply of water, fish and aquatic habitat, wildlife habitat, abundant livestock forage, natural beauty, and recreation. Steve next went into the how and why creeks function the way they do. The soil, water, and vegetation portions of a stream function much like the gears of a machine, and he pointed out the different

components of a stream, the physical processes that they are involved with, and tied them back to the values that they provide. He stressed that the values are provided only when the machine (i.e., the physical processes) is working properly. Steve next gave a basic introduction to stream hydrology, discussing the different levels of flow: base flow, bankfull flow, and flood flow. Bankfull flow is the level that is most responsible for the forming and shaping of the channel. Flood flows perform many functions in the stream system such as groundwater recharge, and it is groundwater discharge back into the stream that provides for base flows.

Clarence Vaughan, lifelong Hood County resident, spoke of his experience of the Brazos River. His family at one time owned 15-20 miles of river frontage, downstream of Lake Granbury, and has noticed there is a lot less flow in the river than there is now. His family has used the river going back to the early 1900s, but today there's not enough water for his grandchildren to even be baptized in. There used to be lots of fish in the river, but presently you can't find enough to catch minnows in. Large islands have developed up and down the river due to low flows. He urged the BBASC to give strong consideration of the river, to keep it alive and healthy, and to rejuvenate it.

The next presenter was Larry Wilson, retired CEO of H.C. Beck Construction, who has lived in Somervell County for the last 30 years about 12-14 miles downstream of Glen Rose. Larry said that bald eagles have been nesting on his property for the last eight years. An avid canoer/kayaker and river enthusiast, he has seen the steady degradation of the Brazos River during the time he has lived along the river. He said there is less flow, less fish, more golden algae blooms, more vegetation in the river, and it's been years since he's seen a mussel in the river. Larry stressed that it's not too late to do something, and that the BBASC should do what's necessary to preserve this precious resource.

Mary Lee Lilly, who ran a fishing camp on the Brazos River for nearly 50 years and spent her entire life near the river, said that it has been heartbreaking to see the river being slowly drained due to mismanagement. She said that river uses are dwindling, children have died from toxic stagnant water, and folks have used portions of dry riverbed for recreational vehicles. She also stressed that it's not too late to do something and asked if she can count on the help of the BBASC.

BBASC member Ed Lowe next displayed photos and letters from his experiences guiding kids from the urban areas of Dallas-Ft. Worth on canoeing and camping trips down the Brazos River below Possum Kingdom Reservoir. Ed relayed how important it is for these kids to have an opportunity to get away and see and experience the natural beauty of this part of the state. He commented on how he has been able to see the kids develop a sense of both self-reliance and teamwork through the trip experience. Ed mentioned that for one trip he made with a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, BRA agreed to time their reservoir releases to enhance river flows. He showed a letter from a student thanking BRA for helping make the experience so enjoyable. Ed closed that he is confident that the BBASC can find the right balance for both the environment and human needs.

The next presenter was Sally Jackson, daughter of John Graves, who wrote of his three-week canoe trip down the Brazos River in the book Goodbye to a River. She read an excerpt from her father's book and spoke of her own experiences with her father and the Brazos River. She acknowledged that the river is different now, and she has only recently come to understand more about the thorny issues of water use and allocation. But she said her connections to the river still run deep, and with luck, she hopes to someday see her grandchildren share in the experiences that she's had on the river.

Steve Nelle concluded the presentation with a few remarks. Displaying several photographs, he reminded the group that the Brazos River is a special place. He thanked the BBASC for their willingness to serve and for accepting the charge laid out before them. He said that fulfilling the charge will take collaboration of all members and that such a collaboration takes time to develop. He reminded the group of the importance of considering all the parts of the river system and the values they can provide when the parts are functioning properly. Steve closed by saying that the future well-being of the Brazos River is in the hands of the BBASC.

### **Approval of BBASC Fiscal Agent**

Chairman Spurgin briefly reviewed the information regarding West Central Texas Council of Governments (WCTCOG) as the potential fiscal agent to handle funds raised by the BBASC for professional services. A motion was made and seconded to approve WCTCOG as the BBASC fiscal agent. All members were in favor.

### **Update on Fundraising Activities**

Starting with BBASC vice-chair Tom Michel, members went around the table and gave progress updates regarding their individual fundraising activities. After adding up the preliminary numbers, Tom reported that there is currently a total of around \$16,000 in commitments. In response to questions about who checks should be made out to and to ensure that they'll be tax-deductible, Dale Spurgin said that he would get that information from WCTCOG and make sure it gets distributed to the group.

### **Formation of Report-Writing Subcommittee**

Gregg Easley (TCEQ) reported that six members of the BBASC had expressed interest in joining a report-writing subcommittee: Cindy Bartos, Tom Conry, Dan Loomis, Ed Lowe, Eddie Saucedo, and Sue Williams. Chairman Spurgin recommended that a report-writing subcommittee be formed with a membership comprised of the previously-listed stakeholders. All BBASC members were in favor of the recommendation.

### **Facilitation and Discussion of Path Forward**

Tom Michel stated that he wants to have an agreement/contract with the facilitators in place by the next BBASC meeting. Members agreed to have Tom begin negotiating a contract with the facilitators. As far as planning future meetings, Suzanne Schwartz suggested that a facilitation subcommittee be formed to assist the facilitators in setting up meeting agendas, schedules, etc. The subcommittee would need to have around four BBASC members including the chair and vice-chair. The BBASC discussed this idea, and Chairman Spurgin decided that this should be an item on the next meeting's

agenda. Suzanne also expressed the desire to begin individual interviews with BBASC members as soon as possible. She said the interviews would be conducted by phone and would last 30 minutes to an hour. Gregg Easley said that he would provide Suzanne and Margaret with the phone numbers of the BBASC members.

### **BBEST Presentation: Flow Regime Recommendations and Testing**

BBEST member Tiffany Morgan gave a PowerPoint presentation to the BBASC covering the BBEST flow regime recommendations, their suggested implementation rules, and scenario testing (presentation posted to web page). She started by discussing the format of the flow regime matrices and then displayed a map of all the gage locations where the BBEST made recommendations. The flow regime matrices of each of the sites were briefly covered. Tiffany said that recommendations were not formulated for the estuaries associated with the Brazos and San Bernard Rivers because these estuaries are more riverine in nature and don't have a lot of data associated with them. She discussed the BBEST's suggested implementation rules for the subsistence flows, base flows, and high flow pulse recommendations and gave examples of each.

Tiffany then discussed the topic of project scenario testing and said that two locations were used in the testing: Brazos River at Seymour and Brazos River at Richmond. She mentioned that no scenario was run on the San Bernard River due to limited data. Several different hydrological scenarios were used for comparison in the testing: gaged flows, WAM current and future flows (with respect to water right use), flow with future water supply projects in place (Double Mountain Fork-West Reservoir for the Seymour gage; Double Mountain Fork-West and Millican-Panther Creek Reservoirs for the Richmond gage), and the environmental flows-only. For the with-project scenario, estimated daily project outflows were estimated based on daily inflows and projected reservoir capacities. Tiffany mentioned that the e-flows-only scenario is unrealistic in that it assumes "infinite infrastructure" capable of diverting or impounding all water in excess of the e-flow recommendations, when in reality projects have limitations on diversion rates and volumes that can be impounded. Furthermore, it doesn't consider times when available water may need to be passed to satisfy more senior downstream water rights.

Tiffany displayed the resulting flow exceedance curves for the two project sites, showing the five different flow scenarios: gaged, WAM8 (current use), G WAM (future use), With Project, and E-flows only. Gaged flows were consistently greater than all other scenarios, reflecting differences in historical operations of water supply systems. There were substantial differences in daily flows among the different scenarios, with the largest being between gaged and WAM flows, which was attributed to the difference in monthly flows computed by the WAM versus observed flows.

With respect to the accompanying geomorphology and sediment transport analysis done at the same two locations, Tiffany said that historical data indicates modest channel widening at both sites and that dynamic equilibrium of the channels has not yet been reached. She also said that it could not be determined whether a new project subject to flow alterations would move the channel towards stability or increased instability. The

e-flow regimes by themselves would provide approximately 80% of the annual average sediment yield compared to baseline conditions.

In addition to the sediment analysis, Tiffany mentioned that two additional analyses of the flow recommendations were performed by the BBEST. The first looked at any potential effects of the different scenarios to oxbow connectivity in the lower Brazos River. Little influence on the frequency of oxbow connections was found under the WAM8, G WAM, and With Projects scenarios. However, the E-flows Only scenario resulted in a greater than 50% reduction in oxbow connections, which was considered to have the potential for significant negative ecological impact. The second analysis looked at the potential impacts of the scenarios on freshwater inflows to the Brazos estuary. Tiffany said that small yet biologically insignificant reductions in inflows resulted with the WAM 8, G WAM, and With Projects scenarios. Again, the E-flows Only scenario was predicted to have significant negative ecological impact due to significant reductions in inflows and sediment delivery.

### **Identification/Discussion of Important Issues to Consider**

No issues were discussed under this item.

### **Set next meeting and discuss future meeting schedule**

Members discussed various options for dates and locations of upcoming meetings. For the next meeting, it was decided that it would be held on March 27<sup>th</sup> at BRA in Waco. Ed Lowe suggested a golden algae presentation by Dr. Roelke from Texas A&M University as a potential agenda item. Matt Phillips requested that a discussion take place regarding the format of going through the BBEST recommendations. Tom Conry recommended that the report-writing subcommittee have a draft report outline for the BBASC to consider at the next meeting. Chairman Spurgin suggested that the subcommittee have a meeting or conference call prior to the BBASC meeting. Regarding future presentations, Chairman Spurgin expected that fewer informational presentations would be scheduled as the BBASC moves along in order to ensure that the BBASC has sufficient time to get their job done.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Adjourn**